

ASE releases statement on the position of practical work in the secondary science curriculum.

2 June 2014

Statement on GCSE and A-level Science Practical Work

Over the last decade, there has been a succession of European projects, reports and international meetings that has positioned inquiry as the preferred pedagogical approach for teaching science and this approach places practical work at the heart of science learning. It is therefore imperative that the science education community work together to improve the teaching and assessment of practical work in the science curriculum.

The Association for Science Education (ASE), under the umbrella of **SCORE** (Science Community Representing Education), has already made its views on reforms to assessment of practical work at A-Level strongly to the Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (**Ofqual**) and to the Government.

Our main concerns are that separating the grade for practical work from the main qualification grade at A-Level may devalue practical work and therefore schools may not be supported in terms of funding, technical support and professional training.

There are proposals to alter the assessment of practical work at GCSE. Given the accountability pressures in schools, the ASE is concerned that any developments must improve the crucial experience of practical work for students.

The ASE Getting Practical project laid the foundations for clearer recognition of the role of practical work in developing technical skills, investigative skills, and in promoting understanding in science. We will support efforts to embed these three components into new specifications for A level and for GCSE and look forward to improved practice in the assessment of these three aspects of Working Scientifically.

The ASE therefore calls for funding, research and development into the building of more rigorous and valid assessments throughout the 11-19 phases in order to encourage and support the practical aspects of science learning.